

# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Release to AM's May 31, 1972

Carroll 343-5634

## KENNEDY SPACE CENTER LAND TO BECOME PART OF MERRITT ISLAND NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

All of the 140,000 acres at its Kennedy Space Center, Fla., spaceport that the National Aeronautics and Space Administration does not use for space mission operations and support will become part of the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge under terms of a lease agreement to be signed June 2.

Since 1963, the Department of the Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service has operated the Refuge on portions of NASA property on Merritt Island, with the Kennedy Space Center and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers managing the remainder, including lands leased for citrus groves, fish camps, and dwellings.

Under the new agreement, the leased property will be administered by the Fish and Wildlife Service along with all other acreage not used by NASA for administrative and launch operations.

Merritt Island NWR, established in 1963, now consists of 83,796 acres. It has considerable value for wildlife, providing habitat for waterfowl, shorebirds, herons, egrets, ibis and several endangered species including the dusky seaside sparrow and southern bald eagle.

According to Nathaniel P. Reed, Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, the new agreement will materially improve management for wildlife in the area. Reed will represent Interior at the signing ceremony at the Kennedy Space Center. The space agency will be represented by NASA Associate Deputy Administrator Willis H. Shapley of Washington.

Dr. Kurt H. Debus, the Kennedy Space Center director, will preside at the signing ceremony to be held in the KSC Training Auditorium at 1:15 p.m.

Invited guests include Senator Edward J. Gurney, other government officials, community leaders of Brevard and Volusia Counties and sports, conservation and wildlife groups.

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